

**Remarks of FCC Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Before the New York State Broadcasters Association’s
Broadcast Leadership and Hall of Fame Luncheon
New York City, New York
October 17, 2019**

Thank you, David, for that incredible introduction and a video that will be etched in my memory for my remaining days. Hearing such kind words from my FCC colleagues, Senator Thune, Senator Smith, and Ed almost makes me speechless. It also means I have to add some people back to my Christmas card list this year!

You should know that, when David called to congratulate me for being selected as New York Broadcasters New Yorker of the Year, I suggested he was way off base. In my mind, I stand before you as someone completely unworthy of this honor. Let’s face it: you are looking at a short, overweight, government bureaucrat, who never spent one day working at a broadcast station; who has never been closer to the news industry than when he had a paper route; whose claim to FCC fame includes successfully allowing broadcast stations to close up shop – albeit as part of the elimination of the Main Studio Rule; and who supports media transactions both within a market and nationally that might actually result in fewer broadcasters. There are far more deserving individuals from this amazing state. But...not being on the selection committee myself, I happily accept this award.

I have been incredibly blessed by the Lord Almighty, especially early in life, to be born and raised in New York. The Empire State, particularly Western New York, provided a wonderful foundation of fulsome life experiences that have been enormously valuable throughout my professional career. Her people are smart, gritty realists who tend to tell it as it is. Throw into that mix some challenging weather from time to time, and you have the formula for some really unique individuals that tend to do well in our fairly complex society. Hopefully, I have successfully applied my New York style — combined with a few gentlemanly manners adopted from Virginia — to Capitol Hill and the FCC.

To be clear, local broadcasting was a key part of my early education. From local news to sports coverage to children’s programming, radio and television broadcasting fed some of my early interests. I want Tom Jolls, who is being properly honored here today, to know that WKBW and Commander Tom were staples in my house growing up in the 1970s. Yes, the show was a bit quirky, and kids today would laugh at the low-tech sets if they saw an episode, but it worked so well in a simpler time. Sorry, Boomer, but as a Bills fan, it’s hard to support a former Jet.

In my tenure at the Commission, I hopefully have distinguished myself as someone who listens attentively to the problems and issues facing broadcasters and tries to find workable solutions. From the local ones, like illegal pirate radio “stations,” to the higher profile ones, like children’s programming reform, to the broader ones, like the seismic shift in the video marketplace, part of my focus has been to reduce the overall regulatory burden on broadcasters, as is demanded by the FCC. This means eliminating any and all unnecessary requirements that impinge on broadcasters’ ability to serve their local communities, be it in Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany, the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, the greater New York City metro area, or elsewhere in this great state, or any other state, for that matter. Your government should not mandate obligations that impose undue costs and require inordinate time to comply when a regulation has far outlived its usefulness in the modern marketplace. There are also smarter ways to do things, including taking advantage of new technologies, in those instances in which our rules cannot be eliminated or remain useful.

The good news is that I still see an important role and very vibrant opportunities going forward for our nation's broadcasters. You are a very special group. While the competitive marketplace may change around you and technology may continue to present challenges, you provide real value to the American public. For example, NextGen.tv may provide new revenue streams through data-casting or advanced advertising, or increase consumer stickiness, via the AWARD technology and other options. For local radio, your role in the community has never been more important, especially with the demise of so many newspapers.

I must apologize for a couple of things though. It turns out that when you are ninth out of ten in a blended family, few pictures exist from younger years, so you didn't see any on the screen. Moreover, with two little ones at home, we don't travel often or far for non-children centric events. Sadly, we also lost my brother-in-law two Mondays ago as he escaped the Earth's gravity by his own hands, making it a time for reflection of his influence on our family and the dozens of people captivated by his soul, rather than celebration. Thus, the O'Riellys – and I wouldn't be anywhere without the support of my lovely wife Sarah – have made a poor showing at such a lovely lunch. Thankfully, I'm joined by two former staffers and two current ones, who actually do all of the good work in my office.

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In closing, it is important to note that accolades in my line work can be dangerous. I've seen it serve to inflate an ego or two, and even as a means to imply that the work on behalf of the people they represent is unchallengeable. Others conjure up spite and envy for not winning, as if it is a measurement of one's worth. I try to approach these moments, which I have had a couple, consistent with the words of Alan Alda, star of the 1980s television show M.A.S.H., who once said, "Awards can give you a tremendous amount of encouragement to keep getting better, no matter how young or old you are." This award will make me work harder, smarter, and longer to ensure that the American people are getting their money's worth from the FCC.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this prestigious recognition. I will always remember and treasure it.